

REMARKS

This responds to the Office Action mailed on October 20, 2005.

Claims 1, 2, 5-7, 9, 10, 13, 14, 18-20, 22, 23, 26, and 28 are amended, claims 4, 11, 12, 17, and 25 are canceled, and no claims are added; as a result, claims 1-3, 5-10, 13-16, 18-24, and 26-28 are now pending in this application.

Information Disclosure Statement

Applicant erroneously asserted that an Information Disclosure Statement was filed November 3, 2003. No such Information Disclosure Statement has been filed. Accordingly, applicant withdraws the request to provide an initialed 1449 Form.

§112 Rejection of the Claims

Claims 5 and 6 were rejected under 35 USC § 112, second paragraph, as being indefinite for failing to particularly point out and distinctly claim the subject matter which Applicant regards as the invention. Claims 5 and 6 have been amended in accordance with the suggestion provided by the Examiner. Applicant believes this rejection has been overcome, and respectfully requests that the rejection be withdrawn.

§102 Rejection of the Claims

Claims 1, 3-9, 11-12, 19 and 21-28 were rejected under 35 USC § 102(b) as being anticipated by Terauchi (U.S. Patent No. 5,862,147). Further, claims 13-18 were rejected under 35 USC § 102(e) as being anticipated by Shokouhi (U.S. Patent No. 6,651,199). All independent claims in the application have been amended to overcome the above rejections. Specifically, the independent claims have been amended to include the specification of a block to be checked, and the assertion of a signal level on a conductor to signify whether the specified block is blank. Support for the added claim limitations can be found in the application as filed. For example, the specification of a block is described on page 4, line 13; and the assertion of a signal on a conductor is described on page 7, lines 17-18, and on page 12, lines 29-30.

Applicant respectfully submits that neither Terauchi nor Shokouhi teaches the subject matter of the independent claims, as amended. Accordingly, applicant believes that the

independent claims are in condition for allowance. Further, the remaining rejected claims depend on the independent claims, and are believed to be in condition for allowance at least by virtue of dependency.

§103 Rejection of the Claims

Claims 2, 10 and 20 were rejected under 35 USC § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Terauchi (U.S. Patent No. 5,862,147) in view of Salzman (U.S. Patent No. 5,438,536). This rejection relies on the anticipation of the independent claims upon which claims 2, 10, and 20 depend. As described above, applicant believes that the rejection of the independent claims has been overcome by amendment and remarks. Accordingly, applicant also believes that this rejection has been overcome by the same amendments and remarks.

Reservation of Rights

Applicants do not admit that references cited under 35 USC §§ 102(a), 102(e), 103/102(a), or 103/102(e) are prior art, and reserve the right to swear behind them at a later date. Arguments presented to distinguish such references should not be construed as admissions that the references are prior art.

Conclusion

Applicant respectfully submits that the claims are in condition for allowance and notification to that effect is earnestly requested. The Examiner is invited to telephone Applicant's attorney (952-473-8800) to facilitate prosecution of this application.

Respectfully submitted,

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By his Representatives,

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Date 1-19-06

By Dana B. LeMoine

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CERTIFICATE UNDER 37 CFR 1.8: The undersigned hereby certifies that this correspondence is being deposited with the United States Postal Service with sufficient postage as first class mail, in an envelope addressed to: Mail Stop AF, Commissioner for Patents, P.O. Box 1450, Alexandria, VA 22313-1450, on this 19 day of January, 2006.

Jane Sugers

Name

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Signature